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The child care teacher's role in providing reading-related literacy experiences for four-year-old children

Sandra Stone
University of Tennessee

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sandra Stone entitled "The child care teacher's role in providing reading-related literacy experiences for four-year-old children." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

Sandra Twardosz, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Connie Steele, Vey M. Nordquist, Sharon Judge

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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THE CHILD CARE TEACHER'S ROLE IN PROVIDING READING-RELATED LITERACY EXPERIENCES FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sandra Stone
December 2001

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

my husband,

Bill Stone,

and

my parents,

Howard and Hershellene McCurdy,

for their assistance, patience, and understanding

throughout this project.

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ABSTRACT

Child-care teachers act as mediators of children's early literacy development by deciding what literacy experiences to provide in the classroom setting. Thus, it is critical to investigate the ways in which they are exercising this role. This study is a systematic replication of an earlier study by the investigator, and provides descriptive information about the reading-related literacy opportunities provided for children by child care teachers: the books they read and make available to children, the reasons for their book selections, and the resources they have for obtaining books. Eleven teachers of four-year-old children from a sample of 10 child-care centers participated. Data were obtained using interview, booklist, questionnaire, teacher's log, and observational measures. The results of the present study replicate the results of the earlier study by showing that the range in richness of the emergent reading environments varied widely among the child-care classrooms. Major concerns relate to the absence of book areas in most of the classrooms, the use of structured pre-reading and writing activities by a majority of the teachers, and the disparity in storybook reading hours among the classroom teachers. Additional concerns were that many teachers did not allow children to have free access to the books read during storybook reading time, that in many classrooms the books available for children's voluntary use were less likely to be high in literary quality than were the ones the teachers read to children, and that few teachers rotated classroom books. The results also indicated that teachers had specific reasons for choosing the books they read and that they appeared to have limited access to resources for obtaining books. These findings suggest a need for teacher education and support in the area of early literacy practices and further investigation of this neglected topic.

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Chapter I

Introduction and Literature Review

The national focus on the general quality of child-care environments is accompanied by the more recent and specific concern about the early literacy environments provided for young children in child-care classrooms. For several decades, researchers have investigated child-care quality as it relates to child outcomes. Among these researchers, the consensus of opinion is that child-care quality influences children's developmental outcomes, with higher quality care leading to better developmental outcomes and poorer quality care leading to poorer outcomes (Burchinal, et al., 2000; Howes & Smith, 1995; Phillips & Howes, 1987). This perspective is reflected in Lamb's (1998) comprehensive critique of child-care research. Lamb concluded:

> Quality day care from infancy clearly has positive effects on children's intellectual, verbal, and cognitive development, especially when children would otherwise experience impoverished and relatively unstimulating home environments. Care of unknown quality may have deleterious effects. (p.104)

Thus, a large amount of empirical evidence documents the importance of early stimulation to the development of a child's ability to learn. It argues, however, that the disparate system of care and education available to children in the United States cannot guarantee the quality of care necessary for all of them to realize their early potential.

As a result of the overwhelming evidence that children learn early and well in supportive environments, the quality of children's early education and care has become a critical issue in this country. The suggestion that child-care programs can have a

powerful impact on all aspects of a child's development has influenced several professional and private organizations to become involved in this issue. These organizations initiated their own investigations to determine the quality of young children's child-care experiences, then developed strategies for improving this quality.

In one such study by the Rand Corporation, Karoly and her colleagues (1998) confirmed the importance of high quality child-care. The Rand Corporation was asked by the "I Am Your Child" Early Childhood Engagement Campaign to conduct an objective review of the scientific evidence available on early childhood intervention programs and to quantify the benefits of these programs to children and parents. The researchers investigated the effects of nine early childhood intervention programs in which evaluation that assessed developmental indicators, as well as other pre-selected effectiveness indicators, had been performed. A summary of the program review indicated that program participants experienced more gains in emotional or cognitive development or improved parent-child relationships than did the children in the control groups who did not experience an early childhood intervention program. This report repeatedly emphasized the importance of the early years for providing a foundation for long-term physical and mental health and cognitive development.

More recently, the publication of Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers, the result of a three-year study requested by the U.S. Department of Education, reported a wide range of information relevant to early childhood education (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001). A conclusion of the study is that one aspect of the child-care teacher's role is to be concerned with supporting children's cognitive development. Although historically the role of child-care teachers has focused on ensuring that children are safe

and their physical and emotional needs are met, strong evidence indicates that young children need an environment that is cognitively stimulating. A critical component of providing for children's educational needs includes the provision of experiences that support their early language and literacy development. The authors of the study highlighted some features of environments that support the development of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that appear to be precursors to learning to read and write conventionally. These features specifically include the mention of shared book reading, children's access to books, and highly trained early childhood teachers.

In the area of early literacy development specifically, the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) collaborated on a joint position statement regarding developmentally appropriate literacy practices for young children. The crucial role of child-care teachers in providing rich literacy environments for children from birth until entry into elementary school was emphasized. Such environments include plentiful materials for reading and writing and responsive adults who read to children and talk about the meaning, parts, and sounds of language. The reading of high quality books to individual and small groups of children is mentioned specifically in this statement, as well as the necessity for the availability of a wide range of high quality children's books in classrooms, schools, and public libraries (IRA/NAEYC, 1998). Thus, these guidelines explicitly recognize the importance of the child-care teacher's role in creating a classroom environment that supports children's early literacy development. They also specify some of the responsibilities involved in effectively exercising that role, such as evaluating books for

their literary merit and selecting those of high quality to read and make easily accessible to children.

With the increasing number of dual-earner and single-parent families in our society, it is estimated that over five million children spend the greater part of the day in some form of out-of-home care (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1999). For children who come from homes in which literacy is emphasized, the child-care environment need only supplement literacy development. But for other children—those who may live in circumstances that limit their access to resources and opportunities that enhance literacy development—the child-care setting may be their primary source of literacy experiences. Therefore, providing young children with a rich literacy environment in child-care is at least as important as providing it in the home.

Theoretical Framework

Literacy is a cultural tool for communication. Meanings that individuals attach to literacy reflect their personality, experience, and culture and influence their relationships with others (Cairney, 1995). Literacy, then, rather than being defined as merely reading and writing, should be defined as social practice. The underlying principle of the social constructivist view of literacy is that literacy is a set of social practices used to enhance social relationships and accomplish productive activity (Gee, 1996). Thus, it is the child-care teacher's role as a transmitter of culture to provide a rich literacy environment for children. Literacy-rich environments include such features as adults who read and discuss storybooks with children, children's free access to books and other literacy materials, and a teacher who carefully evaluates books to be used in the classroom. Also,

the use of high quality books is an important aspect of a literacy-rich classroom environment and an excellent transmitter of culture.

Dewey's (1933) early research influenced educational practices by providing insight into the relationship between children's learning and active involvement. Dewey believed that learning experiences become real to children when they are provided opportunities to work together on their own projects and that the adult is responsible for planning an environment that will facilitate the child's own propensity to learn. He also suggested that it is important for children to be given time to reflect upon their thoughts and ideas and discuss them with others. This active involvement and social interaction create a functional environment that fosters children's desire and ability to use literacy in productive ways.

More recently, psychologist Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) has had a strong influence on early childhood education. According to Piaget, children construct their knowledge through their own experiences as they interact with their surroundings. He stressed the importance of interactions with peers and adults in order for learning to take place. Piaget suggested that children develop early literacy knowledge and skills through active involvement with persons and objects in their environment as they construct relationships between and among literacy experiences. According to Piaget, it is the adult's responsibility to organize the child's environment to facilitate the child's construction of knowledge. Thus, it is the child-care teacher's role to create a classroom environment that supports children's early literacy development.

Another theory that has been applied to and strongly influenced early childhood education in the area of language and literacy is that of Vygotsky (1978). While Piaget's

theory suggests that development results from interactions between children and their environments, Vygotsky's theory focuses on "culture" and social interactions as being strong influences on children as they strive to master forms of cultural behavior, including methods of reasoning, language, and literacy. Forms of knowledge created within the culture are passed on to children by older children and adults. Vygotsky explained literacy development in terms of the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, children have two developmental levels: an actual developmental level determined by things the children can do on their own and a potential level determined by what children can do with guidance from a more knowledgeable peer or adult. Child-care teachers, as the more knowledgeable other, have the power to reflect the role of literacy in the culture. Therefore, children's reading competence is greatly influenced by what kindergarten and child-care teachers do in their classrooms long before children can read conventionally. That children need well-trained child-care teachers who create a rich literacy-supportive environment for them and guide their construction of knowledge by providing the necessary amount of direct adult engagement so that children can actively participate in the learning process is emphasized by the theories of Dewey (1933), Piaget (1969), and Vygotsky (1978). Thus, these three different theories guide the theoretical underpinning of this study.

In conjunction with the emergence of the social constructivist approach to learning for school-aged children, interest has increasingly focused on the years prior to the commencement of formal schooling, which are important in the development of children's understanding of certain fundamental literacy concepts. As children participate in literacy events within their culture, they develop notions about what it

means to be literate. In the early years, emerging literacy, which is social and collaborative in nature, is experienced as children and adults engage in literacy-related activities and experiences (Ashton & Sproats, 2000; Snow & Tabors, 1993). The idea that literacy develops before the onset of formal schooling and includes an emergent phase has focused attention on the environments in which young children spend their time. Child-care classrooms exert a powerful influence on children's early literacy development, discouraging certain behaviors and encouraging others. The social constructivist perspective regarding literacy development emphasizes children's strong desire to gather information from the environment and construct ideas about how the world works, and interaction with adults and more capable peers is an important catalyst to the construction process.

The tie between a child's early literacy experiences in the classroom and his or her outcomes has been established in many studies that have assessed young children's early literacy skills. For example, Dickinson and Tabors (1991) found clear evidence that schools make important contributions to the emergence of early language and literacy skills. They also concluded that literacy-based experiences enhance children's general literacy-related knowledge as well as specific print skills, such as print knowledge. Neuman (1999) found similar results in a study designed to examine the impact of flooding child-care classrooms with high interest children's storybooks and providing instructions about using them. Children's early literacy skills, such as concepts of print and letter/name knowledge, were assessed prior to and following the study. As a result of the intervention, outcome measures indicated that children's increased physical access to

books and training of staff had a statistically significant positive influence on children's concepts of print, letter name knowledge, concepts of writing, and concepts of narrative.

Most of the work in the area of emergent literacy has indicated that early exposure to books and literacy-related interactions with adults are most important in preparing children for becoming literate (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Dickinson & Smith, 1994). However, in early childhood classrooms, literacy, although often centered on story reading and discussion, is embedded in many activities. Classrooms that support literacy development provide literacy materials, such as books, paper, writing tools, and functional signs and symbols, as well as a teacher who plans and implements a curriculum that facilitates children's emerging literacy (Bowman et al., 2001; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). Classroom learning environments such as the one described above provide a context in which adults can communicate to children that literacy is an important aspect of their culture as well as an integral part of their daily lives. These environments furnish children with rich interactive literacy experiences so that, with the help of adults and more capable peers, they may have the opportunity to construct their own ideas about literacy and ways of acquiring it.

Features of Literacy-Supportive Child-Care Programs

The research discussed above has identified four major features of the teacher's role in creating an environment that supports children's early literacy development in the area of early reading. Such environments include a teacher who: 1) reads to children; 2) provides opportunities for children to use books; 3) allows children easy access to books; and 4) knows how to evaluate children's books for literary quality and makes a variety of types of high quality books available for children's use.

Storybook Reading. Storybook reading has been identified by many researchers as the single most important activity for building the understandings, skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are presumed to be necessary for future reading success (Bus et al., 1995; Wells, 1986). Reading to preschool and kindergarten children familiarizes them with differences between oral and written language and teaches them that print contains meaning and that printed words have sounds. Frequent reading and rereading of books develops children's ability to predict what will happen next in an unfamiliar text and helps form children's concepts about books and reading. Storybook reading also teaches children how to handle books without damaging them (Neuman et al., 2000; Pellegrini, Brody, & Sigel, 1985; Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Wells, 1986). According to the theories of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, children are more likely to become literate if they have teachers who guide their literacy development by demonstrating the importance of literacy to our culture, modeling and encouraging children to engage in literate behaviors and activities, such as storybook reading, and planning discussions around storybook-reading episodes so that children have the opportunity to interact with an adult and peers as literacy knowledge is constructed. Thus, the social constructivist perspective supports the idea that, for young children, storybook reading and discussion provide a framework for literacy and language development. The need for frequent, interactive storybook reading to improve young children's vocabulary and comprehension is also emphasized in the IRA/NAEYC position statement (1998).

Several studies that have highlighted the relationship between storybook reading and children's literacy development include Morrow, O'Connor, and Smith's (1990) investigation of the effects of a story reading program on the literacy development of at-

risk kindergarten children. Children in four experimental classes experienced a variety of story-reading instructional strategies that included quiet book reading, a teacher-directed literature activity, a recreational reading period, and a daily summary. The teachers in these classes received training prior to the start of the study. The children in the four control classes followed a commercially produced reading readiness program, and the teachers for these groups received no training. Based on the results of the pre- and post-test measures, the children in the experimental group scored higher than the children in the control group on several measures, such as comprehension tests, story retellings, and attempted reading of favorite stories. The results of this study also indicated that although reading to a child is effective in supporting emergent literacy development, the interaction surrounding the reading seems to have a strong influence on children's literacy growth as well. In a similar study, Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, and Share (1993) found that regular reading to kindergarten children familiarizes them with literary language and not only improves their comprehension skills, but also positively influences their active use of language.

It is essential to point out that experts have known for years that children who come from homes where storybooks are read have an advantage over those children from homes where regular storybook reading does not occur (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Heath (1983), in her well-known book, Ways With Words, examined children's language and literacy experiences in two U.S. communities. She found that early and regular reading to children is characteristic of culturally mainstream families and that by the time the children in these families reach the age for formal schooling they may have experienced one thousand or more hours of storybook reading than children in homes

where early literacy development is not supported. Research has shown that children who learn to read early and well are those who have been read to (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Thus, the disparity in the number of storybook reading hours among children from different types of home environments may place some young children at risk for future reading failure.

Yet there may be a deeper problem here. Consider that a child whose home environment allows little or no opportunity for storybook reading may spend his or her day in a child-care classroom where little reading occurs. It is highly unlikely that this child, on entering first grade, will be prepared to learn to read and write. Therefore, to insure that all children enrolled in child-care programs have rich opportunities to develop their early literacy abilities, it is imperative that child-care classrooms become literacy-supportive environments with ample time devoted to storybook reading.

Access to Books. Most researchers agree that the practice of making books available for children's voluntary use is essential for children's optimal literacy growth, and several have indicated that it is imperative for children to have access to books that have been read to them (Morrow, 1983; Neuman, 1999; Schickedanz, 1999). It is through voluntary use of familiar books that children practice emergent reading behaviors and learn about conventions of print and strategies required for later reading (Schickedanz, 1978; Sulzby, 1985). If, as Piaget theorizes, children construct their knowledge through interaction with people and objects in their environment, they must have access to the books that have been read to them by the teacher in order to construct literacy knowledge. According to Schickedanz (1978), "Mere access to books that have

not been read may not be particularly useful, and no access to books that have been read would limit learning terribly" (p. 51).

Martinez and Teale (1988) isolated factors that affected kindergarten children's specific selections of classroom library books. One of the factors studied was familiarity of books (the extent to which the book had or had not been read aloud by the classroom teacher). The results showed that the children preferred familiar to unfamiliar books. This finding indicates that the classroom practice of reading books and making them available for children's voluntary use positively affects children's use of books when they are free to choose activities. How and where these books are accessible to children is also important and positively affects their use of books as well.

A recommended way that teachers can make books accessible to children is by providing a special area of the classroom that is designated as the book area or book corner. A few studies could be found that investigated the influence of classroom physical design features on children's use of books, focusing primarily on the effects of classroom book-corner design. In a study of kindergarten children, Morrow and Weinstein (1982) examined the effects of a physical design change (e.g., in library corner design) on children's use of literature. To begin with, they found that only five of the thirteen classrooms even had a library corner, and most of these were barren and uninviting. The results of the study showed that children chose to interact more frequently with books when a well-defined, inviting book area was located in the classroom. They also found that poorly designed book areas did not attract children. Morrow (1982) investigated the physical characteristics of library corners and literature activities used by teachers in early childhood classrooms. She found that many of the

classrooms in the sample had neither a well-designed library corner nor regularly scheduled literature activities. Morrow included a description of a well-defined, inviting classroom book area. The features include: 1) physical accessibility of book area, 2) placement of books within children's reach, 3) presence of pillows, 4) presence of easy chairs, 5) presence of carpet, 6) attractive book displays, and 7) location in a quiet section of the room. Huck, Hepler, Hickman, and Kiefer (1997) reported that the efforts spent in creating an inviting and attractive book area are rewarded by children's increased interest in books.

In a similar study, Morrow (1983) investigated home and school correlates of children's interest in literature in 21 kindergarten classrooms. The literary environments of the classrooms were rated by student teachers who used detailed guidelines to evaluate the teacher's daily literature activities and the physical design characteristics of the classroom book corners. The literary environments were rated as being excellent, good, fair, or poor. More than 80% of the children with high interest in literature came from classrooms in which literary environments were rated as being good or excellent and teachers emphasized planned literature activities and provided well-designed book corners. The provision of a well-designed book area by teachers sends a strong message to children about the importance of books and reading in their daily lives.

Although the following study did not focus on the presence or absence of book areas specifically, it examined how teachers managed the books located in the book area. Gillespie, Pelren, and Twardosz (1998) investigated the effect of classroom book rotation and number of books available on the voluntary book use of two- and three-year-olds in child-care. They found that no matter how many books were available in the book area,

children used books the same amount of time. The results also indicated that when more books were available in the book area, children used a larger number of different books. Another finding of the study was that children's presence in the book area was highly correlated with teacher's presence there.

Although few studies investigate specifically how the presence of a classroom book area affects young children's literacy development, social constructivist theory supports the idea that a book area is an important feature of a literacy-supportive environment. Dewey (1933) suggested that children must be actively involved in order for learning to occur, and Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of guidance from an adult or a more capable peer. If child-care teachers provide a quiet, attractive, comfortable book area, children may go there to interact with books independently and/or with adults and other children, as well as to reflect upon their thoughts and ideas about books and literacy. According to Piaget (1969), children must have opportunities to interact with literacy objects, such as books, in order to construct their own literacy knowledge and skills. Child-care teachers who provide a well-defined classroom book area are exerting a powerful influence on children's early literacy development by communicating to them that books are important to our culture and by giving them opportunities to develop literacy knowledge and skills through their interaction with the books displayed in this area.

High Quality Books. Storybook reading and children's free access to books are critical features of a child-care classroom that supports children's early literacy development. This emphasis on books in general is important, but it is also important that teachers be aware of the literary quality of books and include many that are high in

literary quality in their selection of classroom books for children's use. Scholars of children's literature primarily evaluate books along dimensions such as plot, theme, setting, characterization, and creative use of language and illustrations and make judgments about their literary quality (Temple, Martinez, Yokota, & Naylor, 1998). These scholars have developed terms and guidelines to assist people in distinguishing books high in literary merit from those that are mediocre (e.g., Huck et al., 1997). The results of these book evaluations are made available to parents, teachers, and other interested parties through such means as book awards, book reviews, selections offered by children's libraries and bookstores, and the publication of lists of recommended books. Adults who choose books for children can then make selections based on these recommendations in conjunction with the characteristics of the child.

No studies could be found that compared children's and teachers' responses to books that varied in literary quality, although a great deal of scholarly writing on this topic exists (e.g., Kiefer, 1985; Mutter, 1990). However, Stone and Twardosz (in press) reviewed a number of studies to support the argument that the specific characteristics of a book can affect the responses and interaction of the teacher and the children. In one of these studies, Dickinson and Keebler (1989) observed and audio-taped three preschool teachers as they each read a short, simple, familiar book and a longer, more complex, unfamiliar book to their groups of children. They found that short, simple books that focused on labeling pictures were not as likely to stimulate discussion as longer books with more complex story lines.

Other researchers have also provided evidence that type of book and specific characteristics of a book do make a difference. For example, Dickinson and Smith

(1994) found that teachers who used a didactic style (characterized by limited talk and teacher requests for the recall of specific information from the text) often used books with limited vocabulary and minimal plot. The authors hypothesized that the combined effects of teachers' style and the type of books they chose could account for the low level of vocabulary growth in children who experienced the didactic style of storybook reading. Pellegrini, Perlmutter, Galda, and Brody (1990) investigated the effects of type of book (narrative and expository) and format (familiar and traditional) on the teaching strategies of mothers while interacting with their children during book-reading episodes. They discovered that the expository materials elicited more teaching strategies than did the narrative materials and recommended that adults vary the type and challenge of books read aloud to children. Smolkin, Yaden, Brown, and Hofius (1992) found that when print in children's books is made salient to children, such as animals entwining themselves with the letters that begin their names, children are more likely to focus attention on it. Therefore, it appears that even the ways in which print is displayed in books can affect preschoolers' attention to print during storybook reading sessions with adults.

The purpose of the above discussion is not to suggest that only books judged to be high in literary quality should be present in child-care classrooms, but that children should have the opportunity to be exposed to high quality books as well as to other types of books. It also suggests that teachers should consciously choose the books that are used in their classrooms and have some standards by which they judge the quality of the books they will read and make available to children. Only one study could be found that addressed the issue of the guidelines used by teachers to select books. Dickinson, De Temple, Hirschler, and Smith (1992) visited each of 25 classrooms for an entire morning

to observe the book-reading experiences of three- and four-year-old children. Informal discussions with the teachers following group storybook reading revealed great variability in the criteria teachers used to select books: while some teachers chose "books to complement ongoing units," others considered the "literary qualities of books," and "some simply chose a book that would occupy children for the requisite amount of time" (p.329).

Child-care teachers must be concerned about the books that they make available to children. They should give careful consideration to the selection of each book used in the classroom and include many that they consider high quality books. Despite the pivotal role that child-care teachers play in children's literacy development, little information exists concerning the books they choose to provide for children and their reasons for choosing them. Since teachers act as mediators of children's literacy development by deciding what literacy experiences to provide and how to be literate in the classroom setting, it is crucial to determine to what extent teachers are exercising this role.

Purpose

This study expanded and replicated a study by Stone and Twardosz (in press), which investigated the child-care teacher's role in creating a rich literacy environment for four-year-old children. The investigation focused primarily on teachers' classroom practices, including storybook reading, children's access to books, provision of a book area, and the literary quality of the books used in the classroom. Data from teacher self-reports and classroom bookshelf observations were used to describe the teacher's role in providing books and book-related experiences for four-year-old children attending 21

child-care centers in a medium-sized southeastern city. The goals of the study were to determine what books teachers chose to read to children during group storybook reading, their reported reasons for these choices, the extent to which these books could be categorized as high quality, the types of books teachers made available for children's voluntary use, other book-related experiences provided for children, and the resources teachers had for obtaining books.

Stone and Twardosz (in press) used three self-report measures and one observational measure to obtain data. The first self-report measure was an audiotaped, on-site interview with each teacher to collect information about her classroom practices. The second self-report measure, a questionnaire designed to yield personal information, was completed by each teacher. The third self-report measure was a list of books developed to determine what books the teacher had read to children over the past year. The observational measure was a classroom observation designed to gather information about books and book areas.

The results of the Stone and Twardosz (in press) study indicated that the richness of the emergent reading environments provided by teachers varied greatly among the centers. For example, some of the teachers in the sample provided a rich literacy environment that included such features as daily storybook reading, a well-defined book area, book-related activities, a variety of types of books, and a teacher who could discuss children's books and her reasons for choosing them. In contrast, some teachers provided few of these reading opportunities and could not describe any book-related activities or resources for obtaining children's books. In one sample classroom, no books could be found. All teachers reported reading to the children at least once each day. In all but one

classroom, books were available for children's voluntary use, and the teachers provided opportunities for the children to use them; however, these may not have been the books the teacher had read to the children. Fewer than half of the teachers reported that book-related activities were included in the curriculum. In less than one-third of the classrooms observed did the teachers provide a well-defined book area.

Stone and Twardosz (in press) developed a procedure by which book titles generated by the measures could be classified as recommended for their literary merit by children's literature experts. The investigators found that all books named by some teachers during the interview could be classified as recommended while none of the books named by other teachers could be classified as recommended. In general, teachers reported having read more recommended books than were present on the shelves. In six of the classrooms, none of the books accessible to children were classified as recommended. In a large majority of the classrooms, less than 25% of the books displayed on the shelves were classified as recommended. There were two classrooms, however, in which at least 50% of the books displayed were classified as recommended. In 18 of the 21 classrooms in the sample, the books available for children's voluntary use contained far fewer books that were classified as recommended than did the teachers' reports of the books they most often read to children. Books that the teachers reported having read to the children were three times more likely to be classified as recommended than those observed to be available for the children's voluntary use.

Major concerns about the quality of the literacy environments in child-care centers measured by this study relate to the absence of book areas in most of the classrooms, the disparity between the quality of the books read by the teacher and the

quality of the books accessible for children's voluntary use, the wide variability across classrooms in reading opportunities, and the limited genres teachers mentioned. However, the methodology provided a limited amount of information about each classroom. The measures needed to be validated and improved in future research. Additional research that describes teachers' literacy practices in typical child-care classrooms was necessary. Also, teachers' reasons for the existence of certain practices needed to be probed. For example, why teachers keep higher quality books inaccessible to children except during group storybook reading and why they do not provide a well-defined book area are important issues. The results of this study indicated that, despite all the time and energy exerted by researchers to determine the book-related experiences needed to enhance the development of young children's emergent literacy, many child-care teachers did not provide a classroom environment that supports children's early literacy development.

The purpose of the present study was to replicate and extend the earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press) described above with changes in the methodology to address the issues identified in the first study. Because the methodology used in the earlier study provided limited information about the literacy environments provided by the teacher in each classroom, the need for a more thorough investigation was indicated. Several changes were made to improve the methodology. For example, in the first study, the bookshelf observation was taken for one day only. This study included two bookshelf observations spaced at least four weeks apart to provide a more consistent picture of what types of books were actually available to four-year-old children in these child-care classrooms and to produce some evidence of teachers' book-rotation practices. Another

methodological change concerned the issue of relying solely on teachers' recall of books read to children. In this study, teachers were asked to keep a four-week record of all books read daily to groups of children, the number of children in the group, and the number of minutes spent reading each book. These data allowed a more accurate statement about the quality of the books read to children and the genres of books to which children were exposed. Additionally, the interview instrument was revised in order to obtain more specific information regarding classroom practices, such as whether or not the teacher allowed children free access to books that are read during storybook reading and included structured reading-readiness activities as part of the curriculum. A question asking teachers to rank a list of activities they would most enjoy participating in with children was added to the questionnaire. This question was designed to help measure the value teachers place on activities that are believed to support directly children's emergent literacy development.

The primary goals of the present study were 1) to determine what books child-care teachers read to four-year-old children during group storybook reading; 2) to determine what books child-care teachers provide for children's voluntary use in the classroom; 3) to describe the literary quality of books used in the classroom; 4) to describe the reading opportunities child-care teachers provide for the children in their classrooms; and 5) to describe child-care teachers' reasons for their book selections and the resources they had for obtaining books.

Chapter II

Methods and Procedures

Participants and Settings

The method for recruiting participants for this study was similar to that used in the first study by Stone and Twardosz (in press). From a statewide directory of licensed, approved, and registered child-care centers, ten child-care centers were selected from a total of 35 child-care centers in a medium-sized, rural, southeastern county. The listing was obtained through the Daycare Services Unit, Department of Human Resources, Montgomery, Alabama. For the earlier study, the qualifying centers were required to serve a minimum of 50 children. For this study, since few centers listed in the directory served 50 or more children, the sample was selected from the population of centers serving a minimum of 35 children, and there were 25 of these centers. These larger centers were selected so that center size would be more similar for the two studies and to improve the likelihood that some centers included in the sample would contain two or more four-year-old classrooms.

Initially, the investigator proposed the inclusion of 15 four-year-old child-care classrooms in 12 child-care centers. First, to recruit the desired number of sample centers (12), the investigator telephoned the director of every second child-care center on the alphabetical listing of 25 eligible centers. Then, as directors declined to participate, the investigator telephoned all directors of eligible child-care centers, and this effort produced 10 participating centers. Five (50%) of the participating centers were incorporated or privately owned, for-profit centers, while five (50%) of the centers were church affiliated. Tuition ranged from $60.00 per week to $80.00 per week across

centers. When questioned about the facility's tuition, no teacher mentioned a sliding scale or either federal or state assistance, so the investigator assumed that all of the participating centers were self-supporting.

Overall, the participation rate was 40%. Reasons reported for refusing to participate in the study included teacher turnover problems, scheduled center closings, and unwillingness to participate. The investigator hypothesized that, since the location for the study was a rural area where the center directors are unfamiliar with research studies, the directors may have felt threatened by outsiders coming into their centers to investigate literacy practices.

All teachers of four-year-olds at each center were selected for inclusion in this study. One center had two four-year-old classrooms, and all of the other centers had only one four-year-old classroom, which resulted in a total of 11 participating classroom teachers. All teachers were Euro-American and female. Three of the teachers reported having a high school education, four reported having some college courses, and four reported having a baccalaureate degree. Five of the teachers reported having completed a children's literature course. The child-care teaching experience of the teachers ranged from 1 year to 20 years.

None of the eleven teachers had teaching assistants, and there were 10 - 20 children in each classroom. The centers provided full-day programs for children and were open for business approximately 12 hours each weekday. All of the centers served primarily middle-class children, and, overall, approximately 50% were Euro-American and 50% were African-American. While the investigator did not notice any children with obvious disabilities, no particular information was obtained on this topic. The

investigator observed that some of the child-care classrooms were generally set up to support a play-oriented curriculum while others appeared to be geared toward a curriculum that included more formal instruction. Richness of the classroom reading-related literacy environments varied widely. Some classrooms were organized into well-defined areas such as art, dramatic play, blocks, and books. Others had a variety of play materials that were not organized into specific areas, and a few classrooms were very limited in play materials available to the children.

Classroom Visits

The data collection process required three announced classroom visits. These visits were for the teacher's convenience, so they occurred at a variety of times during the center's operating hours, such as naptime, teacher's lunch or break time, or outside play-time. During the first visit, the teacher was requested to keep a 4-week log of all books read to groups of children, the number of children in the book-reading group, and the number of minutes spent reading each book. The first classroom observation was conducted during this visit. The second classroom visit, which occurred two weeks after the first visit, was used to collect the logs for the first two weeks of the teacher's data collection and to encourage teachers to keep the remainder of their log forms up-to-date. During the third classroom visit, which occurred approximately four weeks after the first one, the investigator collected from the teacher the logs for the last two weeks of data collection. Then the investigator conducted an interview with the teacher, explained the booklist and questionnaire, and waited while the teacher completed both of these self-report measures. The teachers were encouraged to provide explanations, elaborate on

answers, and ask clarification questions. The second classroom book observation occurred during this final visit.

Measures

Self-report. Teachers provided information through four self-report measures: an interview, a questionnaire, a booklist, and a teacher's log (see Appendix B). During the third classroom visit, the investigator first conducted a 20- to 25-minute on-site, open-ended interview with each teacher, either in a conference room with only the teacher and investigator present or in the classroom during naptime or freeplay because the teacher was needed to supervise the children. The interview was used to collect the following information: 1) five book titles, three from the four-week log and two that the teacher remembered reading most often to children during the past year; 2) the teacher's reasons for selecting each of the five books that were mentioned; 3) classroom curricular activities related to books; and 4) resources available to the teacher for making book selections. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the investigator. The investigator also took detailed notes throughout the interviews. The notes were compared to the transcriptions to insure that the responses to the interview questions were clearly understood and accurately transcribed.

The second self-report measure was a booklist that was developed to use in the first study (Stone & Twardosz, in press) to prompt the teachers' recall of books that they had read to children over the past year. The booklist had been compiled by consulting two university faculty members who teach in the area of children's literature and a graduate student who is proficient in the use of children's literature with preschool-aged children. The investigator had browsed through the children's book sections of the

university library, a few bookstores, and several department stores. Books recommended by at least two of the previously mentioned individuals were included on the booklist, as well as a sampling of the books displayed in the library and stores. A booklist of 22 books was compiled.

Feedback from two additional faculty members with expertise in children's literature resulted in several revisions of the booklist used for the present study. The booklist used in this study still contains 22 books, but revisions were made to include more classical children's books. Each teacher was given a copy of the booklist before completing the questionnaire and was asked to mark each book she remembered having read to her class during the past year. If the teacher had read another book by the same author or any type of poetry book, she was encouraged to report it. The investigator provided a copy of each book on the booklist for the teacher to inspect in an effort to assist her recall. To insure that a true recollection of books read was obtained during the interview, the teacher did not see the booklist or sample books until after the interview was completed. This segment of the data collection process lasted approximately 15 minutes.

The third self-report measure was a questionnaire that was completed by each teacher immediately following the personal interview and that required approximately 10 minutes of the teacher's time. This measure was designed to yield information about the teacher's educational level, teaching experience, specialized training in child development or child-care, and personal book-related habits. In order to examine how these teachers viewed the importance of literacy-related activities, each was asked to mark three activities she preferred when interacting with children. Also, each teacher

was asked to mark three book characteristics that she most often considered when choosing books for children so that the influence of a book's literary characteristics on teacher's book selections could be examined. The questionnaire contained two confidence level questions. One of these questions pertained to the teacher's accuracy in the four-week-log recording, and the other one concerned the teacher's certainty in marking booklist titles.

The fourth self-report measure was a teacher's log, which was a record of all books read to the children during group storybook reading over the four-week interval of time between the first and third visits. The teacher was asked to record re-reading of books as well as first readings of them. Also, the teacher was asked to record in this log the number of minutes spent reading each book and the number of children in the group to whom she was reading. Each teacher was provided a clipboard containing a form for each of the four weeks. In order to assist the teacher in timing the oral reading sessions, a stopwatch was attached to the clipboard. This procedure required a few minutes each day.

Observations. The fifth measure consisted of two classroom observations that were conducted a minimum of four weeks apart. The first observation was used to gather information about the books that were easily accessible to children for their voluntary use, as well as any others stored in the classroom. It was also used to obtain a description of the book area; to report the general condition and age-appropriateness of the books; and to describe any physical evidence that books were integrated into other aspects of the classroom, such as posters reflecting themes or illustrations from books or children's book-related art projects. The criteria used to determine the existence of a well-defined

book area were consistent with some of those identified by Morrow (1982) and were minimal. They included accessible books, usually displayed on shelves, with available seating, such as a couch, chairs, or pillows grouped near the books. The second classroom observation was used to collect titles of books that were accessible to children for their voluntary use four weeks following the first observation. This second classroom observation assisted in determining whether or not teachers rotated the classroom books that were accessible to children.

The investigator's first classroom observation occurred during the first classroom visit while the children were sleeping, playing outside, or engaged in activities inside. She surveyed the classroom to locate the book area, if one was present. Next, the investigator photographed, sketched, and wrote a narrative description of the classroom book area. She then went to the book area, book box, and any other location where books accessible to children were located, and she counted and recorded all titles. After this process was accomplished, the investigator asked to see any other books stored in the classroom, estimated their number, and briefly described them. This measure required 20 to 45 minutes, depending on the number of books in the classroom.

The investigator obtained interobserver reliability on the accessibility of classroom books using two observers who were blind to the purpose of the study. The observers included a graduate student and a university professor. After receiving instruction in the procedures used to record classroom books, an observer and the investigator recorded the information simultaneously but independently in four of the eleven classrooms. Interobserver agreement scores were calculated for the number of books recorded as being available in the classroom by counting the number of book title

agreements and dividing that total by the number of book title disagreements. Interobserver agreement was 100%.

During the second classroom observation, which occurred during the third classroom visit, the investigator compared a listing of books that had been available to children during the first classroom observation to the books currently available. After noting which books remained available, the investigator added all new titles to the list.

High quality books. A procedure was developed by which book titles generated by the measures could be classified as high in literary quality. After consulting with faculty in children's literature and librarians, three well-respected, comprehensive sources listing books that meet the standards for high quality children's literature were selected. These were: 1) Children's Catalog, published by the American Library Association; 2) The Horn Book Magazine, published by Horn Book, Inc.; and 3) Children's Literature in the Elementary School, by Huck, Hepler, Hickman, and Kiefer. Any book mentioned by a teacher in the interview, marked on the booklist, recorded on teachers' logs, or observed as accessible in the classroom that was listed in at least one of these three sources was classified as high quality for the purposes of this study.

Chapter III

Results

Reading Opportunities

Table 1 presents the percentage of classrooms in which five types of reading-related literacy opportunities were available to the children. These results were obtained by examining the interview and observational data for each center and determining whether or not a particular opportunity was mentioned or observed.[1] They provided a context for presentation of the remaining data gathered during the study.

Book-Related Activities. Eight teachers reported reading stories to the children at least once a day, two reported having two or three scheduled storybook reading times per day, and one reported reading books about three or four times per week. Sometimes these storybook reading times were used to read books that were connected to a weekly theme or lesson. In all of the classrooms, books were available for voluntary use by the children, who were given opportunities to use them. The books were made available to children in classroom book areas, arranged on shelves or display units, or stacked in crates or cartons. The majority of the teachers reported that children could choose to use books during free play or center time. Additionally, several teachers mentioned transitions, such as before lunch or nap, at the end of the day, and after playing outside, as other possible times for children's voluntary book use. Three teachers described independent reading times, when the teacher was not reading a story but all of the children were required to look at books. Two teachers reported that they had all of the

[1] At the end of the study, teachers were asked how confident they were that the information they had provided was accurate. All teachers indicated that they were very confident of their accuracy.

Table 1

Reading opportunities available to children

Categories	Percentage of classrooms (N=11)	
Availability of books for voluntary use	100	(n=11)
Opportunities for voluntary book use	100	(n=11)
Daily storybook reading	82	(n=9)
Book related activities	64	(n=7)
Well-defined book area	27	(n=3)

Note. Data were obtained from interviews and observations.

children look at books whenever the children needed to sit down or the teachers wanted the children to be quiet.

Seven of the teachers reported providing book-related activities for the children, and some of these teachers gave very detailed descriptions of the activities. For example, one teacher described making gingerbread men, hiding one in the child-care center, and taking the children to search for it. The same teacher mentioned that when reading books about space and the moon, the children wore pajamas, ate moon pies, and pretended the elevator was a spaceship. This teacher also responded that each Friday was dress-up day, so the children dressed as their favorite book character and dramatized the story. Another teacher reported that she used puppets when she read some books and that, after the book was read, the children were divided into small groups where they dramatized the story using the puppets. Still another teacher responded that she made numerous flannel board materials available to the children so that they could re-enact the stories using flannel board characters. Other teachers described art and cooking projects, such as using fruit to make a caterpillar and cooking green eggs and ham. Lastly, a teacher explained that after reading If You Give A Mouse A Cookie, she allowed the children to write their own books on mouse shaped pages so that the children could be author, illustrator, and publisher of their own books.

Structured Pre-Reading and Writing Activities One interview question was specifically designed to determine whether or not teachers included structured pre-reading and writing activities in the preschool curriculum. Six teachers reported that they did include these structured activities, and several of them described the activities. For example, one teacher explained, "We have pre-reading and math workbooks, child books

for social studies and science, and other books we use for our Bible curriculum." Another teacher reported that the center provided "small books" that were given to the children, along with paper and pencils, and the children were instructed to trace letters and numbers in the books. Still another teacher said that the center uses a High Reach Curriculum. She explained that it is a very organized academic curriculum that provides stories for the children, along with ideas to enhance the stories, such as puppets or songs.

Book Areas. In only 27% of the classrooms did the teacher provide a defined book area, and most of these were relatively disorganized and uninviting. This figure is lower than the one reported by Morrow (1982) in her investigation of literacy practices in nursery rooms and similar to the figure found in the earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press). The books in classrooms without a book area were usually found placed in plastic/cardboard cartons, stacked in a disorganized fashion on display shelves, or arranged on bookshelves with the spines facing outward, but with no available seating. In a few classrooms, a rug was located next to the book display, but no other seating was available, while in other classrooms carpet squares were stacked near the book area. The books were observed to be in good to fair condition in a majority of the classrooms. However, in three classrooms, the books were judged to be in poor condition.

Literacy Environments

While Table 1 and the information presented above provide evidence of the occurrence of specific reading-related literacy opportunities available to children across the sample of classrooms, they do not adequately describe the variation in richness of the classroom literacy environments. The following descriptions attempt to illustrate some of the differences among the classrooms. Four of the teachers in the sample classrooms

provided environments that were more literacy supportive than did the teachers in the other sample classrooms. For example, the teacher in Classroom 10 was very articulate and appeared to be quite knowledgeable about children's literature as she described her book selection criteria. She provided a variety of types of books with a good sampling of high quality books (e.g., almost 50%) in the books she read and made available to children. This teacher routinely included daily storybook reading and a variety of book-related activities, such as dramatization and cooking, in the curriculum. A well-defined book area was the focal point of this classroom, and book-related themes and posters were displayed throughout the room. This teacher recorded reading 48 books over the four-week period and averaged 121 minutes per week reading books to groups of children.

In contrast, few of the reading opportunities described above were exhibited in three of the classrooms in the sample. For example, the teacher in Classroom 2 could not recall the titles of two books she had read over the past year and could not describe any book-related activities that she provided for the children, nor could she knowledgeably discuss children's books and her reasons for choosing them. In this classroom, far fewer books were available for children's voluntary use than were available in most of the other classrooms, and only approximately 20% of these were high quality books. Although this teacher did provide a daily storybook reading, she did not provide a defined book area; and very little environmental print of any type was observed in her classroom. She recorded reading 20 books over the four-week period (one book per day) and read to the children in her classroom an average of 32 minutes per week.

Only one center in the sample contained more than one four-year-old classroom, and it had two. Both similarities and differences existed between the reading-related literacy experiences provided by the teachers in each of these two classrooms. For both of these classrooms, the number of books available for children's voluntary use was low and contained less than 20% high quality books. As a matter of fact, for these two classrooms, the number of high quality books was quite low for all measures. The teacher in the first classroom (Classroom 1) provided a defined book area and book-related experiences, such as art and dramatic play, for the children in her classroom. She read a greater number of books and spent more time reading to the children than did the teacher in the second classroom. This teacher had a baccalaureate degree and had completed a children's literature course. She could discuss books and book-related topics knowledgeably. The teacher in the second classroom (Classroom 2) did not provide a defined book area, nor did she provide book-related activities for the children in her classroom. She did, however, provide almost twice as many books for children's voluntary use as did the teacher in the first classroom. This teacher had a high school education.

Teachers in the other child-care classrooms provided literacy environments somewhere between the two extremes described above. The teacher in Classroom 3, for example, provided daily storybook reading and had books accessible for children's voluntary use, but no book area was provided in this classroom. The teacher could not elaborate on answers regarding books and book selection criteria and stated that she did not provide book-related activities. Very little environmental print was observed in the

classroom. This teacher also reported that she deprives the children of storybook reading if they are too noisy or do not complete their work.

Despite the fact that there was such a range in the richness of the classroom literacy environments, most teachers indicated that reading to children is an important feature of a literacy-supportive environment and an activity that they enjoy. One of the questionnaire items asked teachers to mark three activities they preferred when interacting with children. The three most frequently named activities, with the number of responses, were reading storybooks to an individual child or groups of children (9); participating in a structured table activity, such as an art/craft activity with children (6); and participating in a musical activity with children (5). No teachers indicated that they preferred activities that involved building with materials, such as blocks or legos.

Types of Books Read by Teachers and Accessible to Children

Data from the interview, booklist measure, teachers' logs, and classroom observations were used to determine: 1) the books that teachers read to children during group storybook reading time/s and the literary quality of these books and 2) the books that were accessible to the children for their voluntary use and the literary quality of these books. The results regarding the literary quality of the books for each of these two categories are included in the discussion of the other results for that category. As mentioned previously, book titles that were listed in at least one of the three comprehensive sources listing recommended books for children (see page 29 for a listing of the sources) that were used in this study to determine literary quality were classified as high quality books.

Books Read to Children. During the interview, each teacher discussed five books, three from the weekly teacher logs and two that the teacher remembered reading to children during the past year. Then each teacher was given a copy of the booklist and asked to mark all book titles she remembered having read to children during the past year. Since the interviews were informal and the interview questions open-ended, teachers were encouraged to elaborate on their answers. As teachers provided their answers to and comments about the interview questions and probes, they mentioned titles of specific books, names of authors, and particular groups of books. The total number of specific book titles, authors, and groups of books referred to by teachers was 51. The most frequently named books were Golden Books, referred to either as a group or by individual titles five times. Dr. Seuss books were mentioned three times, and Eric Carle and Mercer Mayer books were mentioned two times each. The Dr. Seuss, Eric Carle, and Mercer Mayer books were classified as high quality books. Two counting books were included in the total list of book titles named by teachers, but Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom seemed to be the only alphabet book appearing there. One teacher reported that she read Shel Silverstein poetry books to the children in her classroom almost daily. This teacher also mentioned Nursery Treasury, and these were the only poetry books mentioned. Nine information books appear on the list. This number represents 18% of the total number of books named or recalled by teachers, which is higher than the number found in an earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press) in which no teachers mentioned information books.

Table 2 presents the percentage of teachers who recognized each book on the booklist as one that she had read to children during the past year. Two of the books on

Table 2

Books recognized by teachers

Titles	% of recognition
Dr. Seuss books[a]	100
The Very Hungry Caterpillar[a]	100
Winnie The Pooh[a]	91
Cinderella	82
The Lion King	73
Mercer Mayer's Little Critter Books[a]	73
Where the Wild Things Are[a]	73
Bears Go To School[a]	64
Tarzan	64
The Jungle Book	55
The Snowy Day[a]	55
The Tale of Peter Rabbit[a]	55
If You Give a Moose a Muffin[a]	45
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day[a]	36
Barney Goes to the Zoo	36
Is Your Mama a Llama[a]	36
The Children's Book of Poetry[a]	36
Spot books[a]	27
There's Something in my Attic[a]	27
The Napping House[a]	18
We're Very Good Friends, My Mother and I[a]	9
A Country Far Away[a]	0

[a]Indicates a high quality book

the booklist (Dr Seuss books and Eric Carle books) had been mentioned most frequently during the interviews. Three of the books recognized by at least 75% of the teachers were high quality books. However, many of the high quality books were recognized by fewer than half of the teachers, and the culturally diverse book (A Country Far Away), which was a high quality book, was recognized by no teachers.

Table 3 reports the percentage of books classified as high quality that were recalled and read by the teacher in each classroom. It also presents the number of books read to the children during the four-week recording period, the number of books accessible to the children at each classroom observation, the percentage of those books that were classified as high quality, and whether or not the classroom had a book area. The books that were classified as high quality named by the teachers during the interview (included three from teacher's log and two from past year) ranged from 0-80% across classrooms, with a mean of 40%. One teacher named no books that could be classified as high quality, while 80% of the books named by another teacher were classified as high quality. At least half of the books read and recalled by a majority of the teachers were not considered to be high in literary quality.

The teachers were asked to keep a four-week log of all books read to groups of children. The teachers were also asked to record on the log the number of children in the group and the number of minutes spent reading each book. The number of books read weekly by each teacher during the four-week recording period ranged from three to twelve, with a mean of six. The number of minutes per week that each teacher spent reading books to children ranged from 32-121, with a mean of 54. Clearly, the range in the number of books read by each teacher and the number of minutes spent reading them

Table 3

Number and types of books read and accessible to children (HQ = High Quality)

Classroom	% Discussed HQ Books[a]	% Recognized HQ Books[b]	# books accessible 1st OBS	% accessible HQ books 1st OBS	# books accessible 2nd OBS	% accessible HQ books 2nd OBS	# Books read	% HQ books read
1[c]	20	41	17	18	17	18	39	26
2	0	29	37	19	30	20	20	25
3	40	41	34	12	31	10	26	31
4	40	47	131	62	90	80	33	33
5	60	35	55	22	56	27	13	60
6	40	47	36	22	39	28	19	36
7[c]	40	65	28	46	49	46	35	39
8	60	47	53	23	42	21	22	45
9	20	82	25	24	33	10	22	12
10	40	47	80	45	98	45	48	48
11[c]	80	71	32	63	42	62	16	44
[M(SD)]	40(21)	50(15)	48(31)	32(17)	48(24)	33(21)	26(10)	36(12)

[a]Based on total of 5 books discussed by each teacher. [b]Based on total of 17 HQ books (of the 22) presented to teachers. [c]Classrooms with book area.

varied widely among the 11 classrooms. Analysis of the logs maintained by teachers indicated that two teachers read only to the whole group of children and the number of children in each group was 11 and 15, while six often read to smaller groups and the number of children in these groups ranged from 8 – 12. Three of the teachers read to larger groups of children than they reported on their class rolls, and the number of children in these groups ranged from 15 to 26. The percentage of books recorded on teachers' logs that were classified as high quality ranged from 12-60%, with a mean of 36%. In only three of the classrooms (classrooms 5, 9, and 10) did the teacher record on the log form repeated readings of storybooks.

Teachers recognized a large percentage of the high quality books that were on the booklist measure (17 of the 22 books on the list were classified as high quality). The range was 29-82%, with a mean of 50%. These results indicate that the books most of the teachers reported choosing to read to the children in their classrooms were frequently those that have been recommended by experts in the field of children's literature for their high literary quality.

Books Accessible to Children. The number of books available for children's voluntary use varied greatly among the 11 classrooms for each classroom observation. The number of available books ranged from 17-131 across classrooms for the first observation and 17-98 for the second one. For the first classroom observation in one classroom, seven books were displayed on the chalkboard ledge, and 27 others were displayed on a table. The teacher commented that the ones on the table had been put out because of the observation. It is possible that this type of behavior might have happened in some of the other classrooms, but there was no indication that it did. The percentage

of high quality accessible books was quite consistent for each classroom for both classroom observations. The percentage of high quality books ranged from 12-63% with a mean of 32% and standard deviation of 17 for the first classroom observation and 10-80% with a mean of 33% and standard deviation of 21 for the second classroom observation.

Table 3 also presents the data on high quality books accessible for children's voluntary use obtained from the classroom observational measures. For both classroom observations, in almost half of the classrooms, less than 25% of the books that were available to the children were classified as high quality. There were two classrooms, however, in which at least 50% of the books displayed at each observation were classified as high in literary quality. In five of the eleven classrooms in the sample, the books available for children's voluntary use contained fewer books that were classified as high quality than did the teachers' report of the books they most often read to children or the books listed on the teacher's log. Books that the teachers reported having read to the children in these five classrooms were more likely to be classified as high quality than those observed to be available for children's voluntary use or those listed on the teacher's log.

It is possible that the teachers' practices produced part of this difference. During the interviews, the investigator asked a specific question regarding children's free access to books read by the teacher during group storybook reading. In five classrooms, the teachers commented about how and why the children were denied access to many of the books that were read to them. Some of the comments included: "I put the newer books on the top shelf of the closet after I read them"; "My favorite ones are always kept put

away. I don't want them damaged"; "The children have books they can look at, but I don't want some of the books torn up, so I keep them on a high shelf"; and "One child at a time can sit in a chair next to my desk if he/she wants to look at my books." Six of the teachers responded that the children have free access to all books read by the teacher. One of the teachers even reported that the children were very careful with all books but especially careful with library books.

An interview question was designed to investigate whether or not the teachers rotated the classroom books available for children's voluntary use. The criterion used to determine book rotation was that at least 50% of the books recorded during the second classroom observation were different from those recorded during the first classroom observation. Eight teachers reported that they rotated books. However, only three teachers were observed to have done so, at least within the four-week time period used in this study. One teacher mentioned that a large number of books are housed in the director's office and that teachers can use these books for book rotation purposes as well as for instructional purposes. This teacher was one of the three teachers observed to have rotated classroom books.

Teachers' Selection Criteria

The data concerning the results of the third goal of the study, to determine some of the teachers' reported reasons for choosing particular books to read to children were examined. During the interview, teachers were asked to select three books from their four-week log that they preferred to discuss. They were also asked to name two books that they recalled as most often reading to children during the past year. The teachers were then asked their reasons for selecting each of these books to read to the children in

their classroom. The qualitative data from the teachers' responses to this question were transcribed and analyzed according to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) open coding system. Open coding is a "process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (p. 61). Open coding involves asking questions about data and labeling and grouping concepts in order to establish data categories. Next, the data categories are thoroughly examined and compared so that similarities and differences between and among phenomena are discovered. Finally, similar data categories are labeled and grouped to form larger categories. Open coding analysis was conducted individually by the investigator and a university faculty member who was unfamiliar with all aspects of the study. As the teachers' comments were analyzed, six distinct categories emerged. Table 4 presents the number of statements made by the teachers that fell into each of the six categories and some examples of comments representative of each category. The majority of the teachers' reasons for selecting particular books for classroom reading involved the book's teaching function, children's preference for the book, and the book's literary qualities.

Teachers' views about the importance of a book's literary qualities were examined further by summarizing their responses to the questionnaire item regarding the three book characteristics that they consider when choosing books to use with children. The number of teachers who chose each characteristic were: illustrations (6), theme (6), moral (5), length (4), colors (4), number of words on a page (3), size (2), humorous (2), rhyming words (1), and predictable (0). A majority of the teachers indicated that the illustrations were important. During the interviews, many of the teachers' comments about book selection criteria focused on the illustrations. Some teachers commented that

Table 4

Teachers' reasons for selecting books most often read to children

Categories	No. Statements	Examples
Teaching function	30	I use it to teach sequencing
		I use it to acquaint them with poetry
		I use it to introduce vocabulary words
Children's preference	14	The children love it
		The children want to hear it again and again
		The children like to dramatize it
Literary qualities	11	The style of writing and illustrations are great
		It's a classic
		It' a funny book
Children's interaction/talk	10	They get excited and shout out the verse
		They predict events
		They ask questions
Classroom management	5	It keeps the attention of the children
		I read it to quiet them at naptime
		They are very quiet when I read it
Teacher preference	3	It reminds me of my children and their old toys
		I enjoy this one
		It is one of my favorites

the children seemed to ask many questions about the illustrations in a book during book-reading episodes. Other teachers mentioned that large, colorful illustrations attract and hold the children's interest. Similarly, the frequent choice of theme and moral is representative of the teaching function category of responses from the interviews. When probes were used to obtain reasons for some of the teachers' responses to this question, a few of the teachers indicated that they seldom read books that are lengthy or books with many words on each page because many of the children were less likely to sit still and listen. One teacher commented that "a book must be the perfect length because if it is too long you lose them, and if it is too short they want more." Another teacher commented that the size of the book is a very important characteristic because the book must be large enough for everyone to see. Only one teacher selected rhyming, and no teachers chose predictability as a characteristic that they considered important when choosing books to use with children.

During the interviews, teachers gave very specific reasons for selecting the books that they most often read to children. These reasons were quite diverse and varied in complexity. Some of the comments indicated that the teachers were aware of the necessity of exposing children to high quality books. For example, one teacher commented that she wanted the children to experience as many different styles of writing and illustrations as possible. Another teacher expressed a preference for Ruby the Copycat because of its importance for empowering children and improving their self-concepts.

Teachers' Resources for Obtaining Books

Finally, the results pertaining to the resources available to teachers for obtaining books for their classrooms are important. During the interview, teachers were asked how they obtained books for their classrooms. Their responses were read, tallied, and classified into the five major categories identified in the earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press), that included purchases by the center (11), teachers' personal collections (8), public library (4), book clubs and fairs (3), and donations (2). Additionally, one teacher reported making books for the children to use, two indicated that children brought books from home, and one mentioned that a set of books accompanied the center's curriculum.

In four of the classrooms, the teacher was responsible for making the book selections when purchases were made, while in four other classrooms that responsibility seemed to belong to the director. In three classrooms, the teacher and the director conferred when making these selections. A majority of the teachers reported that they used their personal collections of books in their classrooms, and often these personal books were used in conjunction with books that the center had bought. Two of the teachers reported that donations were a primary method of securing books for classroom use. These donations took a variety of forms, from parents giving books to the classroom as Christmas gifts to an annual book drive sponsored by the child-care center. The only book club mentioned was Scholastic. The classroom earned points when parents ordered books from the company, and these points were exchanged for books for the classroom. Several of the teachers reported using the public library as a classroom book source and

resource, and one teacher reported that she selected the books for her classroom from the lists of Caldecott and Newbery award winners.

Classroom Practices and Teacher Characteristics

Table 5 reports some teacher characteristics and classroom practices for each of the 11 sample classrooms. The results for the teacher characteristics came from the questionnaire data, and the results for the classroom characteristics were obtained by reviewing all data for each classroom and determining whether or not a characteristic and/or practice was reported, mentioned, or observed. In this section informal conclusions about teacher characteristics and classroom practices will be offered. The conclusions presented here are only speculative because there were too few classrooms in the sample for any statistical analyses to be performed.

It is necessary to note that decades of research on child-care quality have found that teacher education and training seems to be a strong predictor of program quality and of classroom literacy environments, with more highly educated teachers providing higher quality child-care programs and enhanced classroom literacy environments (Phillips & Howes, 1987; Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deater-Deckard, 1994; Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995; Howes, 1997). Bowman and her colleagues (Bowman, et al., 2001) specifically recommend that:

> Each group of children in an early childhood education and care program should be assigned a teacher who has a bachelor's degree with specialized education related to early childhood (e.g., developmental psychology, early childhood education, early childhood special education). (p. 13)

Table 5

Teacher characteristics and classroom practices

Classroom (# children, tuition, type)	Teacher's ed. level	Teacher's children's lit course	Teacher's years exp.	Daily storytime (grp. size)	Book-related activities	Structured pre-reading activities	# books read per week	# minutes read per week	Free access to all books
1 (12, $65, P)*	college grad	yes	2 ½ yrs.	yes (8)	yes	yes	10	68	yes
2 (14, $65, P)	high school	no	3 ½ yrs.	yes (9)	no	yes	5	32	no
3 (14, $60, C)	high school	no	10 yrs.	yes (9)	no	yes	5	53	no
4 (16, $65, P)	high school	no	1 yr.	yes (15)	yes	yes	5	45	no
5 (20, $67, P)	college grad	yes	5 yrs.	no (26)	yes	no	3	35	yes
6 (18, $70, P)	college grad	yes	3 yrs.	yes (13)	yes	no	5	103	yes
7 (12, $80, C)*	some college	no	20 yrs.	yes (11)	no	no	9	66	no
8 (10, $65, C)	some college	no	7 yrs.	yes (19)	yes	yes	6	45	yes
9 (12, $80, C)	some college	no	3 ½ yrs.	yes (15)	yes	yes	5	44	yes
10 (12, $75, C)	some college	yes	5 ½ yrs.	yes (8)	yes	no	12	121	yes
11 (17, $80, P)*	college grad	yes	8 yrs.	no (12)	yes	no	3	35	yes

* indicates classrooms with book area P= For-Profit Center C=Church-Sponsored Center

Thus, a large body of research suggests that a teacher's education level correlates with his/her classroom practices, with more highly educated teachers providing higher quality environments. Table 5 provides some support for this premise. Since time spent reading to children appears to be the most important aspect of a child-care classroom literacy environment, the investigator looked first at the number of minutes read per week by teachers. The teachers in classrooms 1, 6, 7, and 10, who were more highly educated, read books to groups of children for one or more hours each week. A comparison of these teachers' practices to the practices of those who read to groups of children for less than one hour per week led to the following tentative conclusions. Overall, the teachers who were more highly educated and had completed a children's literature course were more likely to have spent more time reading books to groups of children. Also, the more highly educated teachers were more likely to have provided book-related activities and less likely to have used structured pre-reading and writing activities. Other interesting results were that teachers who were more highly educated and had completed a children's literature course were more likely to have provided a defined classroom book area and to have allowed children free access to classroom books than were the less educated teachers. A comparison of the results presented in Table 3 and Table 5 leads to the informal conclusion that, with the exception of one teacher, the more highly educated teachers who had also completed a children's literature course were more likely to read high quality books and make them available for children's voluntary use.

In addition to the several conclusions regarding the relationship between a teacher's education level and her classroom practices, other observations provide some interesting information regarding classroom characteristics. First was the wide

variability in the teacher/child ratio among the 11 child-care classrooms, with the number of children ranging from 10 – 20 across classrooms. It appeared that 50% of the teachers who had more than 15 children in their class did not read to children daily. Because weekly tuition was similar for all classrooms, it is not surprising that no informal relationship could be detected between tuition and classroom characteristics or teachers' classroom practices. Finally, no relationships could be found between amount of teacher's experience and her classroom practices. Based on the tentative conclusions presented above, it appears that the more highly educated teachers were more likely to have provided rich reading-related literacy experiences for children; however, more education did not guarantee this result.

Chapter IV

Discussion

The present study is a systematic replication of an earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press). The results of the earlier study indicated that the richness of the emergent reading environments provided by teachers varied greatly among the centers. However, all teachers reported reading to children at least once each day, and in all but one classroom books were available for children's voluntary use. Although the teachers provided opportunities for children to use books, the books available to them were much less likely to be high in literary quality than were the books that teachers read to them. Additional concerns of the earlier study relate to the limited genres teachers mentioned, the absence of book areas in most of the classrooms, and the few teachers who included book-related activities in the curriculum. The investigation also found that some teachers have very specific reasons for choosing the books they read, and in many child-care centers resources for obtaining books are scarce.

The results of the present study generally support those of the earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press), again finding that the reading-related literacy experiences provided for children by child-care teachers varied greatly across classrooms. Although most teachers provided daily storybook reading and books available for children's voluntary use and some provided book-related activities, few provided a defined, inviting book area or rotated the books available for children's voluntary use. Also, there was much variation in the quality, number, and diversity of the books that teachers read and made available to children, as well as in children's opportunities to use them independently. Finally, the teachers discussed reasons for their selection of books to read

to children. Some of these reasons were quite complex as teachers discussed the characteristics of high quality books and the strategies they used to expose children to these books. Other teachers gave rather simple reasons for their book selections that were related to teaching a skill or classroom management, such as the desire to keep the children occupied and quiet for a requisite amount of time. Again, it was found that teachers have limited access to resources for obtaining books.

There was one notable difference between the two studies. The results of the present study indicated that during the interviews, as teachers responded to questions about books, they mentioned a greater variety of genres than in the earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press), with information books accounting for almost one-fifth of the books mentioned. In the earlier study, no teachers mentioned information books. The data from the booklist measure indicated that approximately half the teachers remembered having read poetry, although only one teacher recorded children's poetry books on her four-week log of books read to children. Approximately one-third of the teachers remembered having read poetry books in the earlier study. It appears that teachers are not sampling all of the genres as well as they could. A number of experts recommend that teachers expose children to a variety of types of high quality books since different genres may cause different responses. (Barrs & Pidgeon, 1994; Huck et al. 1997; Pellegrini, et al., 1990). Smolkin, et al. (1992) suggested that even the way in which alphabet letters are presented in children's books may attract children's attention to the letters. If teachers expose children to a wide variety of types of books, they may be insuring that all children are provided with opportunities to become interested in books.

The methodology used in this study was deliberately modified from that of the earlier study to provide more descriptive information about each classroom. In addition to the interview, booklist, and questionnaire—which tapped teachers' memories of past events through recall and recognition—a teacher's log was used to document the titles of books read to children during a four-week time period. Another modification of the methods used in the earlier study was the inclusion of a second classroom book observation, which occurred a minimum of four weeks after the first observation. The use of these additional measures permitted some aspects of the classroom literacy environments to be examined more thoroughly, and the data collected by these measures could be compared to the data gathered by other measures. For example, the teacher-log data did not agree with the interview data regarding the number of teachers who provided daily storybook reading. While 10 teachers reported daily reading, the teacher log data indicated that only 9 teachers read at least one book each day to children.

Concerns and Implications for Practice

Results of these two studies identify a great number of concerns about the reading-related literacy opportunities that the teachers provided for children. Some of these concerns are specific and others are more general. The specific concerns include 1) the few teachers who provided a defined classroom book area; 2) the disparity in storybook reading hours among the teachers; 3) the disparity between the quality of books read by the teacher and the books accessible for children's voluntary use; 4) the use of structured pre-reading and writing activities by several teachers; 5) the large size of some reading groups; and 6) the failure of teachers to select predictability as an important book characteristic. These specific concerns about literacy opportunities will

be discussed first. Next, the broader concern about the wide variability in the quality of the literacy environments among the child-care classrooms will be addressed and will lead to the discussion of two additional broader concerns identified by the findings of the study: the need for more effective teacher education for child-care teachers and the lack of resources available in most child-care centers.

Concerns About Literacy Opportunities. In the next several paragraphs, many specific concerns identified by the findings of this study will be addressed. First is the finding that in less than one-third of the classrooms was a defined book area provided. This result is similar to that found by Stone and Twardosz (in press) in the earlier study, and the incidence lower than that found by Morrow (1982). About twenty years ago, Morrow (1982) described the characteristics of a well-designed book area and also found that a well-designed classroom book area increased children's use of books during their free-choice times, as well as other times during the day. Despite the large amount of evidence that classroom book areas are important features of literacy-supportive environments (Gillespie et al., 1998; Morrow, 1991; Morrow & Weinstein, 1982) and the fact that the teachers in this study were more highly educated than the teachers in the earlier study (Stone & Twardosz, in press), a large majority of the classrooms still did not have a book area. In the few classrooms that did have a book area, most were observed to be disorganized and uninviting, and, in particular, comfortable seating was not located near the books, which were not displayed so that children could see their covers. Why, with so much information available about the importance of a classroom book area, did so many teachers fail to provide one? Perhaps the classrooms lacked the space required for teachers to set up centers such as book areas. However, it could be that teachers need

formal training in order to design well-organized classrooms with inviting book areas; they need access to information about how to organize a classroom. Although the presence of a well-designed, inviting book area does not guarantee that children will choose books over other activities, it may encourage children to enter the area and use books more often.

A related concern is that so few teachers rotated the classroom books. In most of the sample classrooms, the books on the bookshelves remained the same for both classroom observations. That teachers rotate the books on the bookshelves is a recommended classroom practice. Gillespie et al. (1998) found that book rotation was effective in promoting young children's voluntary book use. Regular rotation of classroom books may assist teachers in maintaining children's interest in using books, providing new challenges for children, and exposing children to a greater variety of types of books. Although book rotation is an important feature of an inviting classroom book area, teachers who do not provide a classroom book area or who provide a poorly designed one can still rotate the classroom books. Why is it that so few teachers appear to practice regular rotation of the books used in the classroom? It could be that many teachers do not have access to additional books or to information regarding recommended classroom practices such as book rotation. A strategy recommended by the investigator to help solve this problem is that child-care directors provide a central location in the center for housing a large number of books so that teachers can go there to select books to use in the classroom. This practice may encourage child-care teachers to rotate classroom books.

A second area of concern is the disparity in storybook reading hours among the classrooms. This finding may relate to teachers' beliefs about literacy development and the best ways of promoting it. Several teachers in the sample classrooms mentioned using structured reading-readiness lessons as an important part of the curriculum. Perhaps, rather than spending time reading storybooks, these teachers preferred to engage children in more structured types of pre-reading activities that they believed to be appropriate for use with young children. However, it could be that since some of the teachers in the sample met only the minimum educational requirements for child-care teachers, they have not had opportunities for formal training in fields related to child development and, as mentioned previously, lack of formal training impacts teachers' classroom practices. A large amount of research documents the importance of storybook reading to children's early literacy development and later reading success (Morrow et al., 1990; Strickland, 1989; Wells, 1986). Heath (1983) suggested that the disparity in number of storybook reading hours among children from different types of home environments may place some children at risk for future reading failure. If children whose home environments limit their access to storybook reading also spend their days in a child-care classroom where little storybook reading occurs, it is highly unlikely that upon entering first grade they will be prepared to learn to read and write. According to social constructivist theory, children construct knowledge about books and reading as they interact with teachers and peers during book-reading episodes. If child-care teachers do not provide experiences that support children's literacy development, such as ample time spent reading storybooks, some children may not have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for learning to read conventionally.

A third area of concern is the disparity between the proportion of high quality books named and recalled by the teacher during the interview, recorded on the log, and recognized on the booklist and the proportion of high quality books that were found to be accessible to children in the classroom. Stone and Twardosz (in press) found that in as many as 85% of the classrooms in the sample, the books available for children's independent use contained far fewer books that were classified as high quality children's books than did the books teachers read to children. The results of the present study indicated that this disparity existed in almost half of the sample classrooms. Perhaps there was greater correspondence between the two measures in the present study because the teachers were more highly educated than were the teachers in the earlier study. Still, the results of both studies indicate that in as many as 65% of the 32 child-care classrooms, children may not have access to the books that the teachers have read to them.

In the Stone and Twardosz (in press) study, the disparity may have been attributed partially to the ways in which the data were obtained, but, for this study, the researcher corrected the methodological problem by including a second book observation and teacher logs. Also, in the present study, a specific interview question was designed to determine whether or not children were allowed free access to books read by the teacher. The remarks of several teachers indicated that there may be a documented reason for this disparity. Teachers' concern that books will be damaged or destroyed may cause them to make the higher quality books—the ones that have been read during group storybook reading time/s—deliberately unavailable for children's voluntary use. Since almost three-quarters of the teachers reported that they used their own books in their classroom,

it is understandable that they did not want them damaged. Also, it seems possible, based on the findings of this study and the earlier one, that teachers' practice of making the higher quality books that they have read to children inaccessible to them for their voluntary use may be one that is widespread.

The fourth area of concern is the finding that over half of the teachers in the sample classrooms of the present study reported using structured pre-reading and writing activities in their child-care curriculum. A related concern is that in approximately half the classrooms in the samples for both studies the teacher did not include book-related activities in the classroom curriculum. As mentioned previously, these teachers may believe that the best way to promote literacy development is to engage the children in structured lessons, which include such devices as worksheets, workbooks, and phonics methods that have been recommended by proponents of the structured reading readiness approach (Gersten, Darch, & Gleason, 1988; Tough, 1977). However, again, it could be the case that because teachers lack formal training, they may not have access to the information provided in the newer theories of learning and language development, such as the social constructivist approach and the concept of emergent literacy and the classroom practices associated with it (Morrow, 1991; Neuman et al., 2000). Although there is some disagreement among experts about how to enhance children's cognitive development, a majority of researchers recommend that early childhood programs provide considerable opportunities for child-initiated activities and exploration of concrete materials rather than a highly structured academic program (DeVries, Reese-Learned, & Morgan, 1991; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Bowman, et al., 2001).

A fifth area of concern is that some of the reading groups were so large. The teacher log data indicated that three teachers read to groups of children that were larger than the number on their class rolls. The investigator speculated that perhaps these three teachers worked in centers where groups of children routinely were combined in order for teachers to have a break/lunch time or if a teacher was absent. There is some empirical evidence suggesting that teachers should read to small groups of young children. Morrow and Smith (1990) investigated the effects of group size on kindergarten children's comprehension of stories and verbal interactions during storybook readings. They found that children who heard stories read in a small group of three children experienced greater comprehension than did children who heard books read one-to-one or to the whole class. They also found that children who heard stories in a small group or one-to-one were more likely to interact verbally during the book reading episode than were children who experienced large group storybook readings. In a similar study conducted with two-year-olds, Phillips and Twardosz (1999) found that children's verbal interactions increased markedly during small group story book readings when compared to their interactions during larger group readings. Despite the advantages that small group storybook reading provides for children, many of the children in the present study listened to only large group storybook reading. More than likely, these children were given few, if any, opportunities to interact during the book readings. One possible explanation for the practice of reading to only large groups of children is that there is no way for teachers to make groups smaller because there is only one teacher in a classroom. Another reason for these large storybook reading groups might be that some teachers

believe that storybook reading is a good way to keep a large group of children occupied and quiet for a period of time.

A final area of concern is that when teachers were asked to respond to the questionnaire item regarding the book characteristics they considered most important when selecting books to use with children, not one of them selected predictability. Although one teacher mentioned predictable texts during the interview, she did not indicate on the questionnaire that predictability was an important book selection criterion for her. Predictable books contain illustrations that support the text, natural language, repeated sentence patterns and language, and a familiar setting and storyline. Predictable texts are particularly helpful in developing reading fluency because children can rely on the characteristics of predictability. Most experts highly recommend using predictable books in child-care classrooms since they have been found to help develop children's sight vocabulary and strengthen their early reading strategies, such as left to right line sweep and use of picture, meaning, and structure cues (Huck, et al., 1997; Routman, 1994). When Martinez and Teale (1988) investigated the selections of kindergarten children during their time in the classroom library, they found that books that were familiar and/or predictable were chosen twice as often as other books. Katims (1994) reported similar findings when he investigated emergent literacy in preschoolers with disabilities. These children chose to look at and re-enact the predictable stories more frequently than they did the nonpredictable ones. So, the use of predictable books in the classroom may influence children to use books more often since many children appear to prefer them to other types of books.

Broader Concerns. Of major concern is that the findings of both studies indicated such wide variability in the quality of the literacy environments among the child-care classrooms. The populations from which the samples were taken were located in different states and had different characteristics, and the teachers in the present study were more highly educated than were the teachers in the earlier study. Yet, the quality of the classroom literacy environments still varied to the extent that many children were not experiencing a rich literacy environment, and some were experiencing very little literacy stimulation. Some factors that might account for this variability have been identified. First, the variability in quality may, to some extent, reflect the attitudes toward early education and literacy and the economic circumstances of these two diverse areas since both are located in the same region of the United States. A second factor that might explain this variability is the lack of a central administration since child-care centers, for the most part, are independent organizations. Most for-profit, nonprofit, and church-sponsored child-care centers are not subjected to the tight controls that influence the curriculum in public school classrooms. Standards governing the quality of child-care environments are minimal and loosely enforced. Thus, the idea that the child-care center director or classroom teacher makes the curricular decisions for the classroom may help us understand why there is such wide variability in the quality of literacy environments among the child-care classrooms.

A third factor is the widely varying educational backgrounds of the teachers. Since most child-care teaching positions are typically low paid, securing one of these positions requires a high school education and little else on the part of the applicant. Several of the teachers participating in the study exceeded the educational requirement

for child-care teachers, while others did not. Lack of formal training is most likely reflected in teachers' classroom practices. Also, an additional factor that must be considered is lack of resources in child-care centers.

The concerns that have been discussed thus far have identified at least two much broader areas of concern that will now be addressed. Perhaps the most obvious one has to do with the need for more effective teacher education and teacher training for child-care teachers. A large amount of empirical research supports the relationship between teacher qualifications and the quality of care and education received by young children (Phillips & Howes, 1987; Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deater-Deckard, 1994; Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese, & Russell, 1995; Howes, 1997). Since more highly trained teachers tend to provide children with higher quality child-care experiences, a primary recommendation of this study is that proponents of the movement to improve child-care quality in this country develop some of their goals in terms of children's literacy development and that policy makers organize a central governing system that insures, among other things, that child-care teachers are qualified to provide literacy-supportive classroom environments for children.

The second major area of concern is the lack of resources in most child-care classrooms. Most child-care centers operate under severe budgetary constraints that may limit a teacher's access to equipment and materials needed to provide a literacy-rich environment for the children in their classrooms. Therefore, another major recommendation of this study is that policy makers develop ways of funding child-care programs, such as federal, state, and local subsidies so that all children in child-care classrooms have access to literacy-rich environments. Adequate funding for child-care

programs combined with an organized effort to improve child-care teachers' effectiveness could result in marked improvement in the care and education provided for young children in child-care classrooms.

The social constructivist approach to early literacy development emphasizes children's innate desire to acquire information from the environment and use this information to construct their own knowledge about how the world works. In order for this construction process to occur, children need interaction with adults and more capable peers in an environment that allows them to engage in many child-initiated activities and provides them freedom to explore a wide variety of materials (Dewey, 1933; Piaget, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). A compelling argument is that with more education and training, and more resources made available to them, child-care teachers might provide more supportive environments for children's early literacy development.

Limitations of Study

The Sample. The results of this study must be interpreted cautiously. Although an effort was made to obtain a representative sample of centers from a defined area, self-selection did occur. Many directors refused to allow their centers to participate in the study. The refusal rate of 60% is double the refusal rate for the earlier study (Stone & Twardosz, in press). The researcher hypothesized that the directors who felt confident that the literacy experiences provided by their classroom teachers were appropriate were more inclined to consent to their centers' participation in the study. Thus, the results may present a more positive picture than actually exists.

Another factor that may have biased the results of the study is the sample teachers' educational training. A large amount of research supports the idea that

professional training of teachers is related to child-care program quality, which is, in turn, related to children's development (Bowman, et al., 2001; IRA/NAEYC, 1998). Since many of the teachers in this study appear to have exceeded the educational requirement for child-care teachers, the results may indicate higher quality literacy experiences than actually occur in most child-care classrooms.

Defining Quality in Children's Literature. Because quality in children's literature is difficult to define, the investigator chose to consult the opinions of children's literature experts as they have been translated into recommendations for adults in three sources of children's books rather than develop a set of guidelines specifically for use in this study. The three sources used in this study were different from those used in the earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press), yet they produced similar findings from both studies. If other sources had been used, the results of this study may have been slightly different.

Furthermore, the use of these sources is not intended to suggest that child-care teachers should provide only books that have been recommended by children's literature experts. Books related to popular films or action figures that appear to be mediocre in quality may provide enjoyment for children and could increase their interest in using books. Also, it is not possible for all books written for children to be reviewed by experts and listed in sources of recommended books. However, it is important that children have the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of types of books, including those that are high in literary merit, and that teachers carefully choose the books that will be used in their classrooms (Stone & Twardosz, in press).

Issues of Reliability. Finally, the question of reliability must be addressed. There was no interobserver agreement for the teacher log data; however, the investigator must

argue that the data are reliable for several reasons. First, the high refusal rate for this study probably reflects the attitude of the directors but also reflects the attitude of the teachers. The directors who agreed for their centers to participate were, more than likely, of the opinion that the teachers would be willing to participate. That teachers agreed to participate indicated their interest in the research topic and their motivation to keep accurate records. Second, each teacher was given a clipboard (holding the teacher log recording forms) with a stopwatch attached and was requested to place it in a convenient location near the storybook reading area of the classroom. The investigator believed that these items would both remind the teachers to keep the log up-to-date and assist them in keeping the information accurate. Third, no teacher mentioned that keeping a record of classroom reading episodes would be impossible or even inconvenient. Fourth, when the investigator checked after the first two weeks of the recording period (which lasted four weeks), all of the teachers were recording the required data, and there is no reason to believe that they did not continue to do so. And last, there is no way that the teachers could know what the investigator considered an appropriate amount of time to spend reading a book or the recommended group size for storybook reading, so these data were probably recorded accurately.

Thus, even though interobserver agreement cannot be reported, the investigator has confidence in these data. A possible method of obtaining interobserver reliability for this study and similar ones includes placing an observer in some of the classrooms to verify that teacher log data are being recorded accurately, but that would require additional resources, would be intrusive, and would possibly change the teachers'

practices. It could be done, but whether or not this effort would increase the reliability of the study and the validity of the findings is questionable.

Perhaps another threat to the validity of the study was the disclosure of the topic. Prior to the beginning of the study, the teachers in the sample classrooms were informed of the purpose of the study, and this disclosure could have influenced the findings. It is possible that some of the teachers might have made changes in the literacy environment that they normally provided for the children in their classrooms in an attempt to present to the investigator a more stimulating literacy environment than is routinely provided. During the first classroom observation, the teacher in one of the classrooms commented that she had put out extra books because of the scheduled observation. Although there was no indication that this behavior occurred in other classrooms, it is possible that it did. Therefore, these results may present a more positive description of classroom literacy environments than actually exists in the classrooms most of the time.

Additionally, one of the methodological changes may have influenced the findings of the study. The data collection process for the earlier study (Stone & Twardosz, in press) required one classroom visit while the present study, because of the methodological modifications, required three classroom visits. Several advantages resulted from these additional visits. One advantage was that these visits allowed the investigator to verify that teachers were recording the necessary data, and it also served as a reminder for them to continue doing so. Another advantage to these extra visits was that two classroom observations could be conducted so that some features of the teachers' classroom practices could be more thoroughly examined. However, these additional classroom visits present methodological concerns. First, three classroom visits allowed

the teachers more interaction with the investigator, which could have influenced their classroom practices. Also, the additional visits provided teachers with more opportunities to change their classroom practices in order to present a more positive classroom literacy environment than is available to children most of the time.

Implications for Future Research

The expanding consensus regarding the importance of a supportive environment in the development of children's literacy has focused attention on experiences provided in child-care classrooms (Neuman et al., 2000). The child-care teacher plays a critical role in designing the classroom literacy environment and influencing children's knowledge and attitudes about books and reading. Therefore, additional research that describes the literacy practices that occur in child-care programs must be conducted and teachers' reasons for their decisions regarding classroom practices must be probed. For example, examining teachers' reasons for not providing a classroom book area is an excellent research topic that has been identified by the results of this study. Also needed are studies that develop and evaluate procedures to increase the proportion of classrooms in which teachers provide a book area. One example of such an intervention is Neuman's (1999) study of access to literacy. Child-care classrooms were flooded with books and the staff was trained in a series of topics including storybook read-aloud techniques and ways to enhance the physical environment to provide access to books. Results of the intervention indicated that the number of classrooms in which teachers provided books areas more than doubled.

Also, there is need for replication of this study in different kinds of child-care classrooms, such as low income, Head Start, and those with large minority or

handicapped populations. It is necessary to determine whether or not these same problems will be identified in other types of child-care classrooms. However, many programs do not even want researchers to come into the classrooms, so it may be difficult to gather data if child-care directors and teachers resist investigators' efforts to conduct research.

Also, an important issue that has been identified by this study is the extent to which teachers keep higher quality books that they have read inaccessible to children. The finding of the present study mirrors to some extent that of Stone and Twardosz (in press) and indicates that this practice may be widespread. If many child-care teachers are denying children free access to the books that have been read to them, then it is crucial to develop strategies for eliminating this practice. Such strategies might include developing an intervention that could be used to enhance teachers' knowledge of early literacy and its development through allowing children free access to the books the teacher has read and assessing changes in teacher's practices regarding this aspect of a supportive classroom literacy environment. Also, researchers could develop methods that teachers might use for teaching young children how to care for books properly, such as how to turn the pages of a book without damaging them. Teachers will be more willing for children to have free access to all classroom books if they are less concerned that they may be damaged.

Similarly, more information is needed about the responses and interactions that occur when teachers and children read books. The book-reading experience itself is a source of data from which children construct knowledge about the reading process. The characteristics of the book, the teacher's book-reading style, the interactions that occur

during book-reading episodes, and the mediation and support of teachers are important components of storybook reading. We have evidence that teachers vary in their storybook reading style (Martinez & Teale, 1993) and that some teachers' reading styles better support children's literacy development (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). In addition to using a teacher's log to collect data, an observer might be present in the classroom during scheduled storybook reading times to record data related to the book-reading episode. In the context of a study like this one, an observer could document that teachers accurately reported data as well as record the interactions that occur in the classroom.

This study raises questions about teachers' repeated readings of storybooks. It did not appear from the teacher log data that teachers had a plan for reading a book several times so that children could recreate the book and do emergent readings of it. The connection between repeated readings of children's books and children's ability to do emergent readings of books appears to be powerful (Schickedanz, 1978; Sulzby, 1985). An intervention study that assesses the effects of repeated readings of storybooks on children's emergent reading ability may be necessary.

Summary

This study is a systematic replication of an earlier study by Stone and Twardosz (in press). Replication studies are rarely conducted, yet often they could be effective in providing a more thorough examination of a question and in building a body of information about a specific topic, just as this study has done. Several modifications and additions were made to the methods and procedures used in the earlier study, so the results of this study produced a more detailed description of the classroom literacy experiences that child-care teachers provided for four-year-old children than did the

results of the earlier study. This replication study emphasized the need for concern regarding several aspects of child-care classroom literacy environments identified in the earlier study.

Considering the recent increased interest in the influence of early childhood on young children's development, the findings of this study regarding children's literacy experiences in child-care classrooms make a considerable contribution to the literature. Many of the findings of this study, which examined the literacy practices in 11 child-care classrooms in a rural southern county, are similar to the results of the earlier study (Stone & Twardosz, in press) which investigated literacy practices in 21 child-care classrooms in a medium-sized southeastern city. Of major concern was the finding that most of the sample child-care teachers in these two studies did not provide a defined book area. The findings of both investigations also indicated that the range in richness of the emergent reading environments varied widely among the classrooms, that many teachers denied children free access to books that had been read during group storybook reading, and that almost half of the teachers did not provide book-related activities as part of the curriculum. Many of the teachers in the 32 classrooms lacked access to recommended resources for obtaining books that are high in literary merit. These similar results emphasize the suggestion that these classroom practices are actually occurring and that they may be widespread since they were found to be occurring in two rather diverse populations. The fact that these were findings of two studies that investigated literacy environments in a total of 32 child-care classrooms should generate increased concern about the environments in which four-year-old children spend a greater part of their day.

The methods used in this study may provide a substantive contribution to the design of future studies investigating children's experiences in child-care or primary grade classrooms. An innovative feature of the data collection procedure used in this study is the investigator's second visit to the classroom to insure that teachers were keeping the logs up-to-date. Also, the system of requesting that teachers record all books read, the number of children in the reading group, and the time spent reading each book is unique. This novel recording system produced detailed descriptive data of classroom events that have not been previously investigated.

The main focus of this study was to describe the child-care teacher's role in providing reading-related literacy experiences for children. The data from the study illustrated the complexity of attempting to describe children's literacy experiences in child-care. The results of the study provided a description of a few basic aspects of child-care literacy environments, but numerous other aspects of these environments must be investigated.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:
Instruments

BOOK SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. Observe the books displayed in the library corner and within easy access of the children. Record the titles, authors, publishers and dates of publication if available. (Include book and tape sets)

Book Title	Author	Publisher/Date

2. Record how the books are displayed and made available to children. Include a detailed description and sketch of the book area if one is present. Describe method of book display. Observe what centers are located adjacent to the book corner (is it in a quiet part of the classroom?).

3. Record the general condition of the books. (Number or percentage with missing or torn pages, broken spines, tattered, missing covers)

4. Describe other children's books in the classroom that are accessible to children, such as books in the science corner, ect.

Book Title	Author/type	Publisher/date

5. Describe any books that are stored in or near the classroom that are inaccessible to children, such as books stored on high shelves, in closets, cabinets or storage rooms.

6. Record any other pertinent information such as book posters, book related classroom themes, evidence of book related activities or other types of environmental print in the classroom.

7. Photos taken. _____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
(Audio-taped)

I am interested in gathering information about books that teachers read to children in child care centers as well as books that are available to children in these centers.

Tuition _____
Teacher/child ratio _____
Location _____

1. In your classroom, how often do children usually read or look at books? Probes--Are there scheduled, required and/or voluntary times for book use? Are there special activities revolving around books, for example art, cooking or dramatic play?

2. I see that you have with you the list of books that you read to your class over the past two weeks and I have the list of books you read over the two weeks prior to that. Please look over the lists and choose three of these books for us to talk about. Do you remember the author or publisher of (name of book)? For example is it a Sesame Street book or a Golden book? Can you remember the type of book it is? Examples--informational, concept , poetry, fairy tale. (Teacher may look around center if needed) Get the same information for the 2nd and 3rd books selected by the teacher

   Book 1 (title, author/publisher, type)

   Book 2

   Book 3

3. Tell me what you like best about (title of first book). What is appealing about this book? What is it about this book that makes you select it over other books?
   Book 1.

   Book 2.

   Book 3.

4. Do you have a specific purpose for reading this book to children?
   Book 1.

   Book 2.

   Book 3

5. How do the children usually respond to the reading of (title of book)?
   Book 1.

   Book 2.

   Book 3.
   Recycle questions 3, 4, and 5 for second and third book titles.

6. Some teachers have books that they read over and over again to children. Thinking back over the last year, can you remember the names of two books not appearing on your list that you most often like to read to children. Do you remember the author or publisher of the books? For example is it a Sesame Street book or a Golden book?
   Book 1.

   Book 2.

7. Tell me what you like best about this book. What makes you select it over other books?
   Book 1.

   Book 2.

8. Do you have a specific purpose for reading this book to children?

   Book 1.

   Book 2.

9. How do the children respond to the reading of this book?
   Book 1.

   Book 2

10. What do you do with a book after you finish reading it? Where is it placed? Is it made available to children for their voluntary independent use? Why or why not? If the teacher mentions her concern about children's improper handling of the book I will ask if she can recall an incident in which a book was damaged or destroyed.

11. Do you rotate the books in your classroom? How often?

12. Do you include structured pre-reading and writing activities in your curriculum?

13. Let's talk about the books in your classroom right now. How did you get most of them. Are there any other ways that you get books for your classroom? (i.e. purchased new or borrowed from the library) If appropriate ask:

14. Who makes these selections for your (classroom, center)? If teacher makes these decisions, ask approximately how much money is allotted for this purpose.

15. If a parent was donating say, $200 to your classroom to be used solely for the purchase of books. How would you go about making the selections? Do you know of one book you would buy right away? Do you know of others? What resources might you use?

16. Do you remember being read to as a child? What were some of your favorite books?

Now I need some information concerning your training and experience with children and children's books. Please complete this brief questionnaire.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions:

1. How many years experience do you have working with children in a child care setting?

   _____

2. Do you have experience working with children in other settings? _____
   If the answer is yes, please explain.

   _____

4. People have different opportunities for education. Please mark an X beside the highest level of education you have completed.

   ___(a) less than high school graduate
   (b) high school graduate
   (c) some college
   ___(d) college graduate or more
   ___(e) associate degree (2 years)
   (f) technical certificate
   (g) CDA certified
   ___(h) attended workshops/in-service training sessions

   other

   (if other please specify)_____

4. Have you ever had any specialized training in child development or child care? This might include high school or college courses, attending conventions, or in-service training outside of your own center.
   _____yes _____no
   If yes please describe your training.

   _____

5. Have you ever taken a children's literature course at the community college or university
   level?
   _____yes _____no If yes, please describe

_____

_____

6. When interacting with young children, some people enjoy certain activities more than others. If you could choose an activity to participate in with children, which of the following would you enjoy most? Place a 1 beside the activity that you would most enjoy, a 2 beside the activity that you would rank second most enjoyable, and a 3 beside the activity that you would rank third most enjoyable.

(a) building with materials such as blocks or legos
_____(b) working with manipulatives such as stringing beads or working a puzzle
_____(c) reading storybooks to individual or groups of children
_____(d) engaging in a body movement activity
(e) participating in a musical activity
_____(f) participating in a structured table activity such as an art/craft activity
_____(g) engaging in dramatic play
_____(h) participating in a drawing/writing activity

7. People often engage in various book-related activities. Please mark an X beside all activities listed below that apply to you.
(a) go to bookstores and browse through the children's book section
(b) when shopping at grocery or department stores, you stop at the children's book section and browse
_____(c) attend workshops having to do with children's books
(d) attend in-service training program concerning children's books
(f) attend garage sales and look at or buy children's books
_____(g) spend some of my leisure time reading books
_____(h) watch TV shows about children's book
(i) go to the library to get children's books
(j) other (if other, please explain)

_____

8. Some people feel that certain book characteristics are important in selecting books for young children. Please place an 1 beside the characteristic that you most often consider when choosing books for children, a 2 beside the characteristic that you consider next in importance, and a 3 beside the characteristic that you consider to be third in importance.

_____(a) illustrations (pictures)
_____(b) length of book
(c) theme of the book
_____(d) moral of the story
_____(e) number of words on a page (many ___ few ___)
_____(f) rhyming words
(g) colorful
_____(h) size
_____(i) humorous
_____(j) predictable

9. Please read the book titles listed and mark an X beside the titles of books that you remember reading to children in the classroom in the last year. If you remember reading a similar book by the same author you may mark the book.

10. How confident are you that you recorded on the list all the books that you read to children during the four-week interval between visits?

11. How confident are you of your memory when your marked titles on the booklist? (may use probes or give examples)

Appendix B:
Bibliography of Children's Books

Bibliography of Children's Books

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Bemelmans, L. 1939. *Madeline*. New York: Viking.

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Bridwell, N. *The Clifford series*. New York: Scholastic.

Brown, M. 1947. *Goodnight moon*. Illustrated by Clement Hurd. New York: Harper.

Brown, M. 1947. *Stone soup*. New York: Scribner's Sons.

Carle, E. 1987. *The very hungry caterpillar*. New York: Philomel.

Eastman, P. 1997. *Go, dog. Go!* New York: Random House.

Galdone, P. 1998. *The little red hen*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Goldstein, B. 1989. *Bear in mind: A book of bear poems*. New York: Putnam.

Guarino, D. 1989. *Is your mama a llama?* Illustrated by Steven Kellogg. New York: Scholastic.

Hill, E. 1980. *Where's spot?* New York: Putnam.

Keats, E. 1962. *The snowy day*. New York: Viking.

Leaf, M. 1936. *The story of Ferdinand.* Illustrated by Robert Lawson. New York: Viking.

Little golden book series. New York: Golden Books.

Martin, B. 1988. *Barn dance*. Madison, WI: Turtleback.

Martin, B. 1991. *Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?* Illustrated by Eric Carle. New York: Holt.

Mayer, M. *Little critter books*. New York: Golden Books.

Mayer, M. 1985. *When I get bigger*. New York: Golden Books.

Mayer, M. 1992. *There's something in my attic*. New York: Putnam.

McCloskey, R. 1941. *Make way for ducklings*. New York: Viking.

McDermott, G. 1993. *Anansi the spider: A tale from the Ashanti*. New York: Scholastic.

My first book of words. 1992. New York: Scholastic.

Numeroff, L. 1994. *If you give a moose a muffin*. New York: HarperCollins.

Potter, B. 1943. *The tale of Peter Rabbit*. New York: Putnam.

Regan, D. 1996. *The wheels on the bus*. New York: Scholastic.

Seeger, P. 1994. *Abiyoyo*. New York: Aladdin.

Sendak, M. 1981. *Outside over there*. New York: HarperCollins.

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Sesame street series. New York: Random House.

Seuss, Dr. 1957. *The cat in the hat*. New York: Random House.

Slobodkina, E. 1968. *Caps for sale*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing.

Walt Disney series. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corp.

Wood, A. 1984. *The napping house*. Illustrated by Don Wood. New York: Harcourt.

Young, E. 1990. *Lon po po: A red-riding hood story from China*. New York: Scholastic.

VITA

Sandra Stone, a native of Jacksonville, Alabama, completed a Bachelor of Science in Business, a Master of Science in Business, and a Master of Science in Early Childhood Education from Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama. After twelve years' experience teaching in public schools in Alabama, South Carolina, and Germany, she became Director of the Laboratory Center for the Young Child at Jacksonville State University where she also taught undergraduate courses for the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. Taking a leave of absence from this position, she entered the doctoral program in Human Ecology, with a concentration in Child Development, at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The Doctor of Philosophy was received in December 2001.

Her article, "Children's Books in Day Care Classrooms: Quality, Accessibility, and Reasons for Teachers' Choices," co-authored with Sandra Twardosz, is forthcoming in *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*. She has also presented at several conferences, including meetings for the International Reading Association, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Southern Council on Family Relations.

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